

ARIZONA *Our history* LATINA *Our story* TRAILBLAZERS

Stories of Courage, Hope & Determination

Trailblazer Series Vol VI





Josephine "Josie" O. Campos

Librarian Leads in Mining Community



Mining town history runs deep for Josephine "Josie" O. Campos. Her mother, Belen Cuaron, was raised in Jerome, Ariz., where she met Jose Jesus Ortega, whose father worked in the Jerome mines. They married in 1946 after Jose returned from World War II. Josie was born in 1948 in Jerome, and was followed by her brother and sister.

With a larger family, Jose searched for a better paying job and chose Superior, Ariz., where they moved in 1957. Josie recalls that the town in the 1950s, with a population of 8,000, appeared much different than today with its present population of only 3,000 residents. Josie grew up in Superior, attending Roosevelt Elementary and Superior High School.

Josie graduated from high school in 1966, following which she married Ruben Campos, her high school sweetheart. They

lived near Kearny, Ariz., before Ruben moved into a mining job in Superior. Josie worked for a short period and then remained at home to care for her son Ruben Jr., born in 1967. Josie had her second child, Lorraine, in 1982.

It was through her daughter that she became familiar with the Superior Public Library. Josie enjoyed taking Lorraine to the library to read books, and it wasn't long before library staff asked her to volunteer to help the preschool program. In the mid-1980s Josie began assisting with morning and afternoon preschool classes, which were the only classes of this type available in Superior.

In 1988, Josie began working as a part-time evening librarian. When the children's librarian stepped down, Josie then moved into this role where she oversaw the preschool, after school, and reading programs. She served as children's librarian



until 1993, when city staff promoted her to library director.

Josie became the first Latina library director in Superior and in Pinal County. As director, Josie struggled through continuous budget cuts as the town's economy dropped sharply. The Superior mine closed in 1989 and many people left the town to seek other work. Eventually, the library only survived financially because the county library district began funding some of the operations and acquisitions.

She has overcome many obstacles and challenges in her 21 years as library director. Josie faced the challenge of finding funding to automate the library, as mandated through Pinal County. She wrote successful grants to switch from manual to computerized library processes, which also meant learning how to use the computers and the programs needed to complete this task.

Josie has also played a key role in building programs that provide services to the community. She developed the Summer Reading Program, partnered with the historical society to collect oral histories, and brought in traveling exhibits and speakers from the Arizona Humanities Council. Her

programs helped young people develop a love of reading and engaged them in finding information through technology. She has also brought in grant money to provide computer-training classes, which have helped residents write resumes, find jobs, and develop skills, as well as raised grant money for facility repairs and ADA accessibility.

Her long tenure with the city and the library has put Josie into the role of community leader. As a long-time resident of Superior, and a family with mining roots, she can understand the experiences of others in town. As a Latina, Josie maintains a close connection to the residents, since many users of the library are Hispanic. She speaks Spanish and can provide help to those who are not proficient in English.

Josie has received numerous recognitions over the years on behalf of her service to the Town of Superior, from a 1993 Superior Education Association award for her leadership in the preschool and Head Start programs, to honors for her dedication to the community in the areas of recreation and library services. Although she retired in 2012, she still works at the library part-time to ensure its continuing success.

The Raul H. Castro Institute (RCI) is proud to have a role in preserving the significant contributions made by the 2014 Arizona Latina Trailblazers. This vision of the the Raul H. Castro Institute is to improve the quality of life for the Latino community in Arizona by bringing focus to priority issues of education, health and human services, leadership, and civic engagement – all areas in which these Latina Trailblazers have created a tremendous and lasting impact. Through the use of this book in educational settings and through its availability as part of the Arizona Memory Project, their legacy will be perpetuated as generations of leaders continue to be inspired by the spirit and actions of these pioneering women. It has been a privilege to tell their stories.

To learn more about the lives and achievements of the 2014 Arizona Latina Trailblazers, please visit

www.azlatinatrailblazers.com

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Published by Raul H. Castro Institute of Phoenix College

Printed in the United States of America

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oral histories written by Jean Reynolds, Historian

Video production by SRP

Design by Alfredo Hernandez, Phoenix College

Editing by Eileen Archibald, Michelle Klinger, Megan Martin, Phoenix College

The Raul H. Castro Institute is proud to have partnered with Latino Perspectives Magazine for several years. We have collaborated in capturing the memories and telling the stories of the Latina Trailblazers for the Series Vol 1 through Vol V. Our heartfelt thanks for the dedication and passion that they brought to this important project.

Thank you to the premier sponsor for making this project possible:





Interviews with:

Catherine Anaya - Martha Basco - Josephine "Josie" O. Campo-Luera - Charlie García - Frank Barrios - Marie López Rogers - Gina Montes - Dr. Anna Solley and Dr. Christine Martin

Latinas' Stories Remain Important in Arizona's History

As educators, social workers, labor leaders, entrepreneurs, scholars, judicial representatives, homemakers, nurses, ranch wives, or political representatives, Latinas and Hispanas have long been at the forefront of Arizona's history. It is important that we recognize the impact of their individual contributions, and imperative that their collective stories be recalled and shared.

The life journeys of these women are filled with compelling stories that reflect the strength of their vision, their courageous actions, and their thoughtful advocacy. Their outstanding leadership formed strong cultural cornerstones, laying the foundation for women in leadership roles today.

And so we honor them and all that they represent, pioneers who forged our rich cultural heritage and strong role models.



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